



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

## NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DWR Develops Draft Strategic Plan for Implementing Historic Groundwater Laws**

**SACRAMENTO** – The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) seeks public input on a draft strategic plan for its role in carrying out the historic sustainable groundwater laws enacted last fall by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.

The draft plan describes DWR's responsibilities and vision for carrying out the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, a package of laws that aim to protect the groundwater basins that provide more than half of the water Californians use in dry years.

The [Governor's signing message](#) states "a central feature of these bills is the recognition that groundwater management in California is best accomplished locally." The new laws charge DWR with providing guidance and technical support to local agencies. Under the Act, local agencies must form sustainable groundwater management agencies by June 30, 2017 for basins established by DWR as high and medium priority under the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) Program. By the beginning of 2020, these groundwater sustainability agencies must have adopted groundwater sustainability plans for high and medium priority groundwater basins in critical conditions of overdraft. Groundwater sustainability agencies for all other high and medium priority basins must adopt groundwater sustainability plans by 2022. The laws allow for state intervention through the State Water Resources Control Board if -- and only if -- a local agency fails to manage its groundwater sustainably.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act directs DWR to complete multiple activities, including but not limited to, adoption of regulations for local agency proposed revisions to groundwater basin boundaries, adoption of regulations for evaluating and implementing local agency prepared groundwater sustainability plans, update the prioritization of basins, and conduct groundwater assessments into the next decade.

DWR's Groundwater Sustainability Program Draft Strategic Plan, available [here](#).

- describes current groundwater conditions in California;
- outlines the requirements of the new laws, including a timeline;

- describes related actions under the California Water Action Plan, the governor's five-year strategy for more resilient and reliable water resources;
- lists key intended outcomes and benefits of implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act;
- identifies DWR's goals, objectives, and corresponding actions; and
- describes potential challenges and factors that will be key to success, including public outreach and communication.

The public and stakeholders are invited to send comments and suggestions about the Draft Strategic Plan to [sgmps@water.ca.gov](mailto:sgmps@water.ca.gov). DWR will consider all comments before finalizing the Plan.

“Successful implementation of these laws will require good communication and engagement,” said David Gutierrez, executive program manager for DWR’s Groundwater Sustainability Program. “We spell out DWR’s vision for providing support and technical advice in our draft strategic plan, and we want stakeholders to help us improve and refine that vision.”

Though largely unseen, groundwater serves as a crucial source of water for California. In a typical year, groundwater provides about a third of the water used by residents, farms, and businesses. In dry years, the proportion may be as high as 60 percent. Many communities around the state depend entirely upon groundwater.

In some regions, heavy groundwater pumping has dropped groundwater levels too low for wells to function, caused degradation of water quality, created an irreversible sinking of the land above overdrafted groundwater basins, and harmed wildlife by reducing the connection between groundwater and surface streams. The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act seeks to bring key groundwater basins into balance for the long term, thus helping communities cope better with climate change and future droughts.

For more information on groundwater, please visit <http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/index.cfm>.

For more information on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and its implementation, please visit <http://www.water.ca.gov/cagroundwater/>. To sign up for email updates, please visit <http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/subscribe.cfm>.

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*Visit [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com) to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit <http://drought.ca.gov> to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought. The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.*

